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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000756

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E MBEYZEROV
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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [MA](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: SUBJECT: MADAGASCAR: WORRIED MALAGASY CHOD WARNS
THE AMBASSADOR

REF: ANTAN 710

Classified By: DCM Eric Stromayer for reasons 1.4 B and D.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Malagasy Army Defense Chief, (newly-promoted) Brigadier General Andre Ndriarijaona, and his Chief of Staff, Colonel Raphael Ramasy called on the Ambassador and Defense Attache November 3, at their request. General Ndriarijaona expressed concern over the lack of concrete progress towards a political agreement and doubted whether the ongoing meetings in Addis Ababa will produce results. He said he feared a "social explosion" if such an agreement is not reached. His veiled message -- and likely main reason for seeking the meeting -- appeared to be serious consideration of military intervention if the talks in Addis fail. The Ambassador advised him bluntly that any such action would not resolve anything and would only further delay the return to constitutional order on which any future restoration of aid and military assistance will depend. Nonetheless, the General's basic message was clear: if the situation deteriorates following a failure to reach agreement in Addis, he will seriously consider pushing Madagascar's inept politicians aside and taking charge. END SUMMARY.

Pessimism over political progress: Potential "social explosion"

¶2. (C) The Malagasy Army Chief of Staff (CEMGAM, CHOD-equivalent), General Ndriarijaona, met at his request with Ambassador and Defense Attache on November 3, (coincidentally) the day after his promotion to Brigadier General was announced. Without pleasantries, the General began by expressing concern over the likelihood of insufficient political progress in Addis this week towards a consensual four party agreement. He suggested that any continuing impasse would cause a "social explosion" and significant misery for the general population, especially if the impasse leads to a suspension of AGOA and further sanctions. He indicated a desire for continued diplomatic efforts to pressure the political participants (none of whom he expressed particular support for) to reach an agreement. The Ambassador reassured him that this was being done, citing his personal visits to Ravalomanana in Johannesburg as an example.

Concern over role of Ravalomanana

13. (C) The General also raised the specific topic of former President Ravalomanana and his capability to disrupt the political process due to his access to significant personal funds. He suggested efforts on the part of Ravalomanana to use these funds to influence Malagasy military, although he admitted that there was no confirmation of this. He then suggested that freezing Ravalomanana's assets would reduce the chances that he could use them to block a political agreement. The Ambassador explained that it is not possible to undertake such an action against someone who has not been indicted or condemned for criminal actions. However, he reassured the General that Ravalomanana's presence in South Africa provided ample opportunity for concerned parties to ensure that he was not engaged in inappropriate or illegal activities there, such as the much rumored attempts to hire mercenaries. The General stated clearly that Ravalomanana's return to Madagascar at this time could trigger unrest, possibly civil war. His Chief of Staff said Ravalomanana should not return "during the transition." The Ambassador noted that Ravalomanana may wish to run in the next election and is free to do so, which would necessitate his return during the transition, although not necessarily any time soon. The Ambassador stressed the need for reconciliation, including between Ravalomanana and the military. The General responded that the problem is that "no politicians here keep their promises."

Military Intervention?

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14. (C) Behind the General's comments about a social explosion and the expected misery of the Malagasy people -- both repeated twice -- lay a veiled message that military intervention might be considered in case of political failure in Addis. Sensing this, the Ambassador suggested that the General probably experiences daily solicitations of partisan military intervention in the current situation, which the General acknowledged while stating that they have resisted such suggestions until now. The Ambassador advised bluntly that any counter-coup or establishment of military control would only delay the necessary return to constitutional order -- so desired by both the Malagasy people and the international community. It will also delay, he said, any future resumption of foreign military support, which the General had said was an increasingly important issue in terms of both training and equipment. In closing, the Ambassador stressed that the military must give the political/negotiation process the maximum opportunity to succeed, and invited the General to stay closely in touch as the political situation evolves.

Comment

15. (C) The continued political maneuvering by all four parties makes optimism difficult for observers on the sideline, to include the military. As in our last conversation with the CHOD (reftel), it still appears that the he and the military prefer to avoid involvement in the political process. However, such neutrality is difficult in practice. The military leadership is still struggling to maintain their own unity in the face of numerous internal problems. This is compounded by the fact that senior members (including him) are linked closely to the situation, with many active-duty Colonels and Generals embedded within other government ministries. In this period of uncertainty, HAT President Rajoelina has just taken the opportunity in conjunction with his Council of Ministers to reinforce his support within the military by confirming promotions for 22 new Generals, concentrating on those officers whose actions actively or tacitly supported his displacement of Ravalomanana last March. These newly-promoted officers include the current Ministers of Defense and Environment, the

husband of acting Prime Minister Cecile Manarohanta, the Commander of the Gendarmerie and, of course, General Ndriarijaona himself. While clearly unhappy with the political elite, the military leadership generally seems at a loss as to how to move the process forward. However, the General's basic message was clear: if the situation deteriorates following a failure to reach agreement in Addis, he will seriously consider pushing Madagascar's inept politicians aside and taking charge. End comment.
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